

# Lament of War

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Summary: An altered, freed Hork-Bajir seeks a new way to fight.  
Short n' sweet.

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I looked up toward the sky, waiting. Wondering if she would come.  
Half-hoping she would. Half-dreading she would.

I am Pai Bevar. A Hork-Bajir, but not. I was born a Hork-Bajir, yes,  
but at my birth I was changed. Forced to grow more quickly. To become  
more intelligent. To become something that was not truly  
Hork-Bajir.

I am one of those that once served she who was Visser One. I was  
given to Visser Three, to serve him, until I was freed by the  
Hork-Bajir who are also free. They are not different from me. I am  
different from them.

I was changed. I was made to grow sooner, larger, smarter.

There is a Seer here, a female named Toby Hamee. She, too, is  
different from the others, but she is not like me. She is smarter  
than me, just as I am smarter than the others. She was born here, on  
this world, while I was born to be a host. A Controller. I was never  
meant to use the intelligence given to me. That intelligence was  
meant to be used by the Yeerk who used me, so that I - they - could  
speak better. That was all my intelligence was meant to be used  
for.

But now I am free. Now my intelligence may serve me. Toby Hamee  
sometimes asks my opinion. That makes me proud of my intelligence.  
But I feel it serves no purpose. I was once a host to be used by a

more intelligent creature. Now I am an opinion used to help a more intelligent person. Where is the difference in that?

The others will not let me fight. It is not because I am intelligent - no, that has nothing to do with it. They will not let me fight because I only have one arm. I do not see where that truly matters. I can be as dangerous as any of them! I am armed with my intelligence! I have two arms, one physical, one mental. That makes me equal to anyone with two physical arms. But the others don't see it that way. They are not intelligent enough to understand. Toby Hamee understands, but she does not tell the others to let me fight. I am bitter about that.

But she is a Seer. She is more intelligent than me. Perhaps she has a reason I cannot understand that keeps me from fighting. Or perhaps I am merely stubborn, and her greater intelligence agrees with the lesser intelligence of the others - that I am unfit to fight.

Instead I stay in our valley, helping to harvest bark for those too young to harvest their own. I love children. I love to help them. Some are afraid of me - me, with my one arm. I wish they were not. But the children are not as intelligent as I am. They cannot understand that it is more painful for me, for them to be afraid of me, than it was to lose my arm. I lost my arm long ago. Our ally, the one we call Jake, removed it. He had been defending himself from me, aboard the mothership. Now, he is sorry he did so. I do not blame him. It was not my arm he removed, it was that of the Yeerk within me. It was the arm of the one who meant him harm. I did not mean him harm, so it was not my arm. Still, my arm or not, it has left me with only one arm now, now being a time when the arm would have been mine.

The others do not understand why I do not blame Jake for my injury. They are not intelligent enough.

I heard our ally, Marco, once say that he thought Toby was more intelligent than humans. That made me think. It made me think for a very long time.

Humans are more intelligent than normal Hork-Bajir. A human thought that Toby Hamee was more intelligent than humans.

Could that mean that I was as intelligent as a human?

Could that mean that I that a human might understand?

That was why I waited, half hoping, half dreading, that she would come. That was why, when I saw the gray wings of the water-hawk above me, my hearts leapt with joy and sunk to my feet at the same time.

a voice in my head asked.

"Yes," I replied.

The bird landed beside me. Quickly, it grew taller, its feathers and beak melting from its face to reveal the face of a dark-skinned young human girl. The bird continued to grow until it became half human, half bird, a strange mix of human face, large wings, tail-feathers, and taloned human legs. Then the talons melted into bare human feet

with their weak little fingers, the tail disappeared, and the wings lost their feathers to become human arms.

"You are Cassie?" I asked the human who remained of the bird.

She nodded. "Yes," she replied. "Tobias said you wanted to see me?"

I copied the movement of her head. "The others will not let me fight, because I have only one arm. But I am smarter than them."

"You are?" she asked.

I nodded again. "I was made to be smarter, to be larger, to be better. I am not a Seer," I told her carefully, "but I am not Hork-Bajir. I am different from both."

"You are taller," she agreed, looking up at me. Her short human neck looked awkward in the position it was in. "And you certainly speak better."

"I understand more, too," I added helpfully.

"Tobias said you wanted to see me," she said again. "Why?"

My shoulders slumped. "I am bored," I said.

She smiled, a human facial expression that bares the teeth. It is supposed to be a pleasant expression. I do not see how baring one's teeth at another is supposed to be pleasant. "Really?" she asked, in a way I believe was meant to urge me to explain myself.

"I am useless," I explained. "I cannot fight with the others. But I am not intelligent enough to be like Toby Hamee, to be like the Seer, to be needed for other things besides fighting. I need to do something."

Her smile faded into something more confused. "Do you have any ideas?"

I frowned a little. "I have an idea," I said slowly.

She smiled again, this time without baring her teeth. There are two ways of smiling - either you may bare your teeth, or you may simply turn up the corners of your mouth. She was doing the second this time. "What is it?"

Suddenly I felt self-conscious. "It is stupid."

"Nothing's stupid," Cassie assured me. "Come on, tell me, what do you want to do?"

I looked at her. She seemed to honestly want to know - but of course she did. She wanted to know why I asked Tobias to ask her to come meet me. "I want to write," I said finally.

"To write?" she repeated. "You want to learn to write?"

I turned my head from side to side. It is a movement that is opposite to nodding, in both movement and expression. I have adopted many

human forms of nonverbal communication. "I want to write, but I cannot learn," I said. "I don't think I am smart enough."

"Of course you can learn," Cassie assured me. "I can teach you."

I shook my head. "I want to write now," I explained. "I asked Tobias if he would ask you to come, because he has said how patient you are. I asked you to come, so I could ask you to write for me."

"Write for you?" she repeated. I had confused her again. "If you want to write, why would you want me to write for you?"

"I have ideas," I said. "Thoughts in my head. Thoughts I want to write down."

Slowly, she nodded. Now she understood. "But you don't know how to write."

I nodded too. "Will you write for me?" I asked.

Cassie smiled. "Of course I'll write for you," she said. "But you have to promise me something."

"What must I promise?"

"That, as I write for you, you let me teach you to write for yourself."

I copied her slow smile. "I promise," I said.

Several weeks later, we sat in a tree. I was in the tree, perched comfortably between two branches, with my tail hanging down. Cassie sat a little farther down, leaning against the trunk of the tree, her legs hanging off either side of the branch she sat on. In her hands she held a small pad of paper, on which we'd practiced the twenty-six letters of her race's alphabet, and on which we'd written my ideas. It was a pad of paper we would soon have to replace with another, one which, I hoped, would only have my thoughts on it, one which would not contain practice, but thoughts.

"Could you read it to me?" I asked her. "Could you read my thoughts?"

She looked at me and smiled. "They're beautiful thoughts, Pai," she told me. "I'd be honored to read them through."

"My writing is not like yours," I warned her.

"I can see that, but that's to be expected," she said. "You have a much bigger hand - not to mention fewer fingers, and claws."

"You are a good teacher," I told her. "I just have a bad hand."

"Not a bad hand," she corrected me. "A different hand."

"A different hand," I agreed. "I write with left hand."

"That couldn't really be helped," she said. "You only have the one."

"Yes, only one," I agreed impatiently. "Please, could you read them?"

She smiled, then looked at the paper. Then she narrowed her small, dark eyes slightly. "Lament of War," she read. Then she looked back up at me. "Is that the title?"

"What you showed me - of books, of writing - they all had a name. That is the name of my thoughts."

She smiled. "Okay. I understand." Then she began to read my thoughts again.

"Lament of War

I was born to be smart and to be a slave;

I was made to be bigger, but no more brave

Than my brother beside me, than my mother behind me,

Than the father I never knew, than the family I could never see.

I miss my mother, want to know her name

But from my birth, I was not allowed to be the same.

Into a war I was born, to be the body of one without their own

From the beginning I was abused, no pity ever shown.

I was to be a slave, I was to be a host, I was to be a tool;

I was to be a body and a weapon and a toy and a fool.

But there was more to me! There was me, somewhere within

A person, a soul, a being, who was never allowed to begin.

No, I was to be a tool for those who made me, a body not my own,

Into a war was I born and into that war was I thrown.

All I wished for was love and life, all I wanted was freedom and food

All I received was a master and a cage, and kept from all that might be good.

No one ever wants a war! And yet there are wars upon wars always.

Why are there wars when no one wants to fight, anyways?

Humans say war makes men men, but that is not what I see

I see men dying and returning dead, and those that live, live miserably.

I see pain and I see death, I see children die and mothers die,

I see everyone dying and no one stopping to cry.

I see people fighting to live and fighting to kill and fighting for right,

But I see so few people fighting simply for the sake of the fight!

Why do we fight and kill when fighting is bad and it is a crime to kill?

When will we ever see our error and find the strength of will

To stop the fight and the war and the bloodshed of ourselves and our own?

To find the way to peace and freedom from what we don't condone?

Until that time it will remain, the war shall always be the same.

People shall die and people shall kill those who don't share their name.

We will send our children to die and praise them when they do;

We shall fight until the time we discover something new -

Until we find that peace, that thing which we have not seen,

Things shall be as they always have been,

These times when to be adult is to die shall be with us today,

And those who are wise shall bow their heads and say,

'These are the times when men are men and children die

When families cannot mourn and mothers cannot cry.' "

I listened with my eyes closed, to her young voice as it read the thoughts that had plagued me for so long.

I wanted to fight, yes. I wanted to fight just as the others did - for the right to live free. I didn't want to fight, not for the sake of fighting. I wanted to fight for those like me, who could not fight.

If I could not fight, then, so be it. It did not mean I did not fight, inside. It did not mean I didn't fight in my mind, in my thoughts.

"It's beautiful, Pai," Cassie said, her voice quiet. I looked down at her, and was surprised to see water coming from her eyes.

"Are you hurt?" I asked her, worried.

She nodded slightly. "Yes," she said. "But in a good way. Deep inside."

I leaped from the tree. "We must get help for you!" I said. How had she been hurt? What had hurt her?

Cassie shook her head quickly. "No," she said. "I'm not \_injured\_, Pai. It's your poem. I didn't know you wanted to write poetry."

"Poetry?" I repeated, confused.

"You don't know what it is?" she asked, wiping the water from her face. "It's when words sound musical, or rhyme."

"Rhyme?"

"Sound the same at the end," she explained. "Like they do in yourâ€| your thoughts."

"I liked to make the sounds at the end the same," I said. "It sounds better that way."

Cassie smiled. "Yes, it does," she agreed.

"Someday," I told her, "I want to share this."

"You're not going to?" she asked me, seeming surprised.

"The other Hork-Bajir will not understand," I explained. "But you understand. Someday, I want to share this with other humans. Other people who will understand."

Cassie started to get up. I grabbed a branch with my one hand, then dug one of my feet into the side of the tree. I raised the other leg so that Cassie could use it to get out of the tree more easily. Humans supposedly came from tree-dwelling animals. I do not believe this. They are too awkward in trees to have once lived in them. "Keep writing," Cassie urged me. "Keep putting your thoughts on paper. I want you to have this." She reached behind herself, getting the pouch she carried on her back. She pulled out a smaller pouch. "It's waterproof," she said. "Don't open this until I leave," she told me. She smiled. "Someday," she said, "you'll be able to share your thoughts with other humans, Pai Bevar. And when you do, you'll have written so many of them, you can have your very own book."

I thought about that as I took the odd pouch from her. I smiled back. "I would like that."

"So would I," she assured me. She began walking away. Just as she had whenever we worked on writing, she had come here in her normal, human form, in order to carry the pad of paper.

"But Cassie!" I called after her. She turned around. "What should I call my book?"

"Wait until you write it," she suggested. "Then you'll know."

When I could no longer see her, I opened the pouch. I was careful not

to rip it. I opened it by balancing on one leg, then balancing the pouch on the other and using my fingers to open it.

Inside was a book. It was brown like tree bark. On the front, it said "Journal". But, when I opened it, the pages were blank. There was no writing on them.

There was something else in the pouch. I put the odd, empty book under the small stub that remains of my right arm, and reached into the pouch again. The other thing was a box made of cardboard. When I opened the box by carefully pulling the top open with my teeth, I saw that it was filled with pens. Blue pens, which I liked better than black.

I smiled a closed-mouth smile, the type of smile I prefer. A blank book and pens.

A normal Hork-Bajir would not have understood, but I am different from normal Hork-Bajir.

I put the blank book and the pens back into the pouch. I closed the pouch. I smiled to myself again. "Journal," I said. "Yes, that is a good name."

End  
file.